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CONTENTS.

TILE-MOSAICS

OF

THE LAHORE FORT.

BY

J. PH. VOGEL, PH. D.

Illustrated by seven Page Plates in Colours and eight Monochrome Plates.

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The Journal of Indian Art and Industry.

TILE-MOSAICS OF THE LAHORE FORT.

By J. PH. VOGEL, PH. D.
SUPERINTENDENT, ARCHÆOLOGICAL SURVEY, NORTHERN CIRCLE.

"*But the sight of wonder is, when travelling over the plains of Persia or India, suddenly to come upon an encaustic-tiled mosque. It is coloured all over in yellow, green, blue, and other hues, and as a distant view of it is caught at sunrise, its stately domes and glittering minarets seem made of the purest gold, like glass, enamelled in azure and green, a fairy-like apparition of inexpressible grace and the most enchanting splendor.*"

(SIR GEORGE BIRDWOOD, *Industrial Arts of India, Vol. II. p. 306*).

I. INDIAN TILEWORK.

The seventy-six plates of coloured drawings, which will be preliminarily published in five consecutive issues of this Journal, are intended for final publication as a volume of the Archæological Survey of India. The one hundred and sixteen panels of tile-mosaics reproduced in these plates are found on the west and north walls of the Lahore Fort which contains the palace buildings of the Great Moghuls Jehangir and Shah Jehan and consequently dates from the first half of the 17th century of our era.

This kind of wall decoration is unequalled for its variety of design and magnificence of colour. Introduced from Persia, it was largely resorted to for the brick buildings in the plains of Northern India, especially in the Punjab, the most famous specimens being found at Lahore, the capital of that province.

To the sober taste of the Westerner this mode of decoration may appear too gay and gaudy to suit the nature of a building intended for religious worship or for a last resting-place of the dead. But certainly no decorative art could be devised more truly oriental in the dazzling brilliancy of its bright colours, more bright and brilliant in the splendour of an eastern sun.

The best known example in Lahore is the Mosque of Wazir Khan which has formed the subject of two well-illustrated papers in this Journal.* This building situated in the heart of the ancient, brick-built city has preserved on its façade and minarets the full glory of its gorgeous tile decoration.

The Chini ka Rauza † at Agra is also familiar to travellers in Hindustan and lovers of oriental art. Other less celebrated specimens at Lahore are the Mosque of Dai Anga, ‡ the wetnurse of the Emperor Shah Jehan; the gateway (known as Chauburji) of the Garden of Zebinda Begum, the talented daughter of Aurangzeb; that of the Gulabi Bagh or Rosewater Garden laid out by order of Mirza Sultan Beg; and the gateway (known as Chintgarh) belonging to the Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan, the great engineer and governor of Lahore. These buildings were all constructed between 1630 and 1660 and consequently belong to the reign of Shah Jehan, the most magnificent of the Great Moghuls.

The imperial palace of Lahore outshines all these buildings by the truly princely magnitude of its colour decoration. A wall nearly 500 yards in length and 16 yards in height—in other words a surface of more than 8,000 square yards—has been adorned with panels of tile-mosaics. What lends this work an uncommon interest, is the circumstance that here not only geometrical or foliated designs have been used, but in defiance of the tenets of the Moslim creed a great number of these panels exhibit figures of living beings. Many of the scenes, illustrating the court life and pastimes of the Moghul sovereigns, possess considerable historical interest. Several relate to elephant fights, which were one of the favourite recreations of the Moghul Court; and one of the finest panels shows four horsemen playing the noble game of *chaugan* or Persian polo.

All such panels as exhibit man or beast have been selected for reproduction,§ except those which are too much damaged to be recognisable and some which are merely duplicates executed in a different scheme of colour. The work of reproducing these one hundred and sixteen panels has involved considerable labour. It was started in the beginning of 1902; and in April of the same year my draftsmen had prepared tracings of all panels selected for publication, the exact colour of each separate tile being marked on the tracing. The height of the wall and the position of some of the panels, which had to be reached with bamboo ladders tied together, made their task not only difficult, but decidedly perilous.

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* J. L. Kipling, *The Mosque of Wazir Khan*, Lahore, J.I.A. No. 19. (July 1887) and Andrews (July 1903).

† E. W. Smith, *Moghul colour decoration of Agra*, Part I, Allahabad, 1901. ‡ *Archæological Survey of India, Annual Report* for 1904-5 pp. 20f. plate IV.

§ Only one of the plates represents a Spandrel of floral design.

The work of preparing drawings on a reduced scale from the tracings was accomplished in my office, but not without comparing each finished drawing with its original on the Fort wall. It took no less than five years to bring the work to an end, as only part of the summer months could be devoted to it, the cold season being taken up by inspection tours and excavation. The copying and colouring were entirely done by my Head draftsman Munshi Ghulam Muhammad, who has been attached to the Archæological Survey for twenty-four years. The excellence of his work does great credit to the Mayo School of Art at Lahore where he received his first training in the days when Mr. Lockwood Kipling was Principal of that institution. It will be doubly appreciated by those who have experienced the scorching heat of a Lahore summer, which makes life intolerable and labour loathsome even to natives of the country.

The art of tile decoration, of which the Lahore palace affords so striking an example did not originate in India. It is true that traces of such work have been found in the course of excavation of a few buildings of the pre-Muhammadan period, notably among the ruins of the famous pagoda of Kanishka at Peshawar. But in this peculiar instance there is every reason to suspect foreign influence. It was apparently not until the Muhammadan period that tile decoration came into use in India and almost exclusively on buildings raised by the followers of Islam.* On the monuments of the earlier or Pathan period it is but sparingly found. Under the rule of the Moghuls, on the contrary, it became one of the most favourite modes of architectural decoration. The finest example of the earlier period is the tomb of Rukn-ud-Din or Rukn-i-Alam, the glory of Multan. The saint after whom it is named lived in the reign of Ghiyas-ud-Din (A.D. 1320-24), the first king of the Tuglaq dynasty of Delhi and in that of his son Muhammad Shah (A.D. 1324-51).

"The Rukn-i-Alam," Cunningham † says, "is built entirely of red brick, bonded with beams of *sisu* wood which are now much decayed. The whole of the exterior is elaborately ornamented with glazed tile panels and string courses and battlements. The only colours used are dark blue, azure, and white, but these are contrasted with the deep red of the finely polished bricks, and the result is both effective and pleasing. These mosaics are not, like those of later days, mere plain surfaces, but the patterns are raised from half an inch to two inches above the background. This mode of construction must have been very troublesome, but its increased effect is undeniable, as it unites all the beauty of colour with the light and shade of a raised pattern."

Similar tile decoration is found on the tombs of the Nahars "the Wolves," an Afghan dynasty which ruled at Stipur in the Muzaffargarh district of the Western Punjab, apparently at the time of the Lodi kings of Delhi (15th century). In addition to the colours enumerated by General Cunningham, we find yellow tiles used in the Sitpur buildings.

It is from about 1500, the commencement of the Moghul period, that tilework appears on the monuments of Delhi. One of the earliest examples is the tomb of Sikandar Lodi at Khairpur. It must date from about A.D. 1517, the year in which that king died. The arches inside the tomb are embellished with bands of tilework in foliated and geometrical designs and the spandrels contain rosettes in which blue tiles have been introduced. The entrance gate and the two kiosks in front show traces of square blue tiles; but here nearly all colour has gone.

Somewhat later in date are the tomb of Khawaja Khizr (A.D. 1524) at Sonepat, the battlements of which retain remnants of deep blue tile decoration, and that of Maulana Jamali, known as Jamali-Kamali, not far from the Qutb at old Delhi. The latter tomb is one of the most pleasing examples of early tilework found in the vicinity of Delhi. On the outside, a border of blue-and-white rectangular tiles of the Multan type runs in a single row between the sandstone brackets which support the eaves. The parapet has remnants of a foliated border, the cornice a narrow band of glazed blue bricks, and the battlements square blue tiles cut so as to fit between the projecting merlons. Round the doorway also there are traces of tile decoration in deep and light blue and green. The interior of the tomb has a dado of tile-mosaic in a geometrical star pattern of deep and light blue, green and yellow. The upper portion of the wall and the ceiling are decorated with carved plaster, partly inlaid with blue and yellow tile.

The tomb just described is an interesting transition from the early tile work of the Pathan period to the more elaborate ornamentation of the reign of Akbar (A.D. 1556-1605). Some noticeable examples of the latter type are found in the vicinity of "the Old Fort" or Purana Qila which was the Delhi of the early Moghul emperors. Opposite the western gate of "the Old Fort" stands the Khair-ul-manazil, a ruined mosque (A.D. 1562), which still retains some bits of brilliant tile mosaics of geometrical design in the spandrels over the central arch and also round the three prayer niches or *mihrabs* with medallions containing the sacred *kalimah*.‡ Other examples in the same neighbourhood are the ruined tomb known as Nili Chhaattri, "the blue Pavilion," the entire outer surface of which appears once to have been decorated with geometrical and floral mosaics including inscriptions; and the

* I know of only one example of a Hindu building decorated with tiles—a small Siva temple known as Nili Chhattri—outside the Salimgarh Fort at Delhi, but evidently these tiles are the spoils of some earlier Muhammadan edifice.

† *Archl. Survey Report*, Vol. V. p. 132; plate XXXIX.

‡ *Archl. Survey Annual Report* for 1903-04 p. 25, plate XI.

Nila Gumbaz "the blue Dome," now used as a Police Station, near the village of Nizam-ud-Din Auliya. The latter building should perhaps be assigned a somewhat later date on account of its high-necked dome. Among the wonderful collection of historic tombs grouped round the Dargah of the Auliya Saint, one of the most attractive is that of Akbar's foster-father Shams-ud-Din Atgah Khan, surnamed Azam Khan.* This building is adorned with faïence mosaics in which deep blue and green tiles are combined with white marble in geometrical patterns—a mode of decoration not found anywhere else. The building must date from A.D. 1567.

The tile mosaics of Akbar's reign exhibit a scheme of five colours—deep and light blue, green, yellow and white; the designs are essentially geometrical.

The tile-work of Lahore represents again a later stage in the development of this mode of building decoration. It belongs to the 17th century and more especially to the reign of Shah Jehan (A.D. 1628-58) the period when Moghul art reached its greatest magnificence. At Lahore I know of only one example of the 16th century, namely the tomb of Shaikh Musa Ahangar, or "Moses the Blacksmith" which with its brilliant blue dome greets travellers on their first arrival in the capital of the Punjab. The flat dome is faced with small glazed bricks, the drum with square blue-and-white tiles and the body of the building with a frieze of tiles of the same shape and colour. Shaikh Musa, the patron-saint of the Lahore blacksmiths, died in the beginning of Akbar's reign and his tomb is said to have been built by that Emperor's mother.†

The Lahore tile-work of Shah Jehan's reign is of a much richer and more elaborate kind. In most cases the entire façade of the building is decorated with faïence-mosaics arranged in rectangular and square sunk panels. Sometimes the surface remaining between those panels is covered with a layer of red-coloured plaster, in which by means of white lines the effect of brick and mortar is produced. This is, for instance, the case with portions of the Mosque of Wazir Khan in Lahore City. The tiled panels display geometrical or more commonly foliated and floral patterns, enclosed within simple geometrical or scrolled borders. Very often the design consists of a flowering plant, a vase filled with flowers or a dish of melons and other fruit. It will be noticed beneath that these vases occur also on tile-clad buildings in Persia, but are ultimately derived from China. According to Mr. Edmund Smith‡ they are seldom or never found on Indian edifices prior to the time of Jehangir's reign. The flowers represented are in most cases hard to identify owing to their shapes being conventionalized and their natural hue adapted to the restricted scheme of five or six colours. Some panels contain inscriptions, either texts from the Quran in Arabic or foundation-poems in elegant Persian. The general character of the designs is closely related to that used in the fresco painting of the period, but the latter mode of decoration admitted of greater freedom and naturalism. This will be evident by comparing the tile-mosaics of Wazir Khan with the fresco painting inside that mosque.

The spandrels over the arches usually display graceful designs of flowers and foliage intertwined with scroll-work; and along the battlements runs a border of the well-known *kangurah* or crenelated pattern. The domes of mosques and tombs are usually faced with tiles of a uniform colour, but in a few cases, such as the tomb of Dai Anga, the wet-nurse of Shah Jehan, two colours are used. The mosque founded by the same lady, locally known as the Railway Mosque, is the only instance at Lahore known to me, in which tile-work is employed to decorate the interior of a building. This edifice which for several years was utilised as a Traffic Superintendent's Office, has recently been restored to its pristine destination.

It would be tedious to enumerate all the buildings of Lahore which are decorated with tile-work. The most noticeable have already been mentioned in the course of this paper. It should, however, be remarked that, although this tile decoration of Shah Jehan's reign is nowhere better represented than in the capital of the Punjab, some isolated examples are met with in other places of Northern India. In the same province we have the Shahi Masjid belonging to the Tomb of Shah Burhan at Chiniot in the Jhang district and the Dakhnai Sarai in the Jalandhar district, built by Ali Mardan Khan about A.D. 1640.

The Chiniwali Masjih at Thanesar in the Ambala district has its minarets and eastern façade covered with floral tile-mosaics. According to Rodgers,§ the date of the building is A.H. 973 or A.D. 1565-6.

Sadhaura, a small town in the Ambala district possesses the Mosque of Abdul Wahab, built in A.D. 1669, in the reign of Aurangzeb, the whole façade of which was once covered with tile-mosaics in floral patterns alternating with texts from the Quran.

That the art of tile decoration penetrated also in the Province of Agra is proved by a few monuments. In the very heart of the sacred Hindu city of Mathura (*vulgo* Muttra) there rises the Jami Masjid founded by Abdun-

* *Archl. Survey Annual Report* for 1903-04 pp. 24, plate XI.

† Thornton, Lahore pp. 145, 148 and 151 calls this tomb Pathan and states that it was built in Akbar's reign. Latif, *Lahore*, pp. 204 and 393 asserts that Shaikh Musa died in A.H. 925 (A.D. 1519) and that his tomb was built in the time of Ibrahim Lodi, but quotes the Ain-i-Akbari where it is said that he died in the beginning of Akbar's reign. The latter statement is correct. Cf. Tabaqat-i-Akbari (Lucknow 1875) p. 394.

‡ *Moghul Colour Decoration of Agra*, p. 14.

§ Revised list of objects of archæological interest in the Punjab, Lahore, pp. 49-f.

Nabi Khan, who was governor of Mathura from 1660 to 1668 under Aurangzeb. The date of its foundation (A.H. 1071 or A.D. 1660-1) is contained in a chronogram. "The building," Mr Growse * writes, "is of considerable size and has four very lofty minarets, which with other parts of the fabric were once veneered with bright coloured plaster mosaics; but only a few panels now remain, and the whole of the mosque is rapidly becoming a ruin." It is interesting to note that Abdun-Nabi, the founder of this mosque, at the time of his being appointed to Mathura, was governor of Sirhind in the Punjab.

A much finer and more famous example of tile decoration is presented by the Chini ka Rauza, "the China Tomb," which rises on the left bank of the Jamna and is not the least of the Moghul buildings of Agra. It has been fully described and illustrated by Mr. Edmund Smith in one of his able volumes.† There is no inscription to tell the date of its erection, but tradition holds that it contains the remains of Afzal Khan, a poet, who died at Lahore in A.D. 1639. If this tradition is correct, we may here also suspect the influence from the Punjab, the home of Indian tile decoration. Mr. Smith, however, is of opinion that the Chini ka Rauza was not built until the reign of Aurangzeb, but does not substantiate his view by any arguments.

Agra, or rather the neighbouring village of Sikandrah, possesses earlier specimens of tile decoration in the kiosks of Akbar's mausoleum and in the Kanch Mahall, said to have been built by the Emperor Jehangir for his queen, Jodh Bai. But in both cases the tile-work is of the earlier and plainer type found in buildings near Delhi.

I have remarked above that the art of tile-work was introduced into India from Persia, where it formed the chief decoration of brick buildings for many centuries.‡ Here also a great variety of style is noticeable in buildings of different periods. In general, it may be said that in the earlier examples geometrical designs are used and the prevalent colour is blue. This is, for instance, the case with the famous Blue Mosque of Tabriz built by Jehan Shah (1437-68) and with the Masjid-i-maidan at Kashan of the 13th or 14th century. I may note here that the Persian term *kashi* by which tile-work and faïence in general is indicated, not only in Persia but also in Northern India, is derived from the name of the last mentioned town, Kashan in Irak.

It is interesting that in the earliest Indian tile-work, that of Multan, also the colours are blue and white and the patterns exclusively geometrical.

Another famous example of early tile-work is the Gor-i-Amir, "the Grave of the Chief," i.e. the Mausoleum of the Great Timur built in his capital Samarkand in A.D. 1370. It was constructed by Persian artisans and under an architect, Muhammad ibn Mahmud of Isfahan, who is mentioned by name in one of the inscriptions on the edifice. The high drum and melon-shaped dome are clad with glazed bricks of dark blue, light blue and white. The courtyard is decorated with faïence mosaics of a different style, similar to those found on Persian monuments of the beginning of the 15th century and probably executed about that time.

The tile-work of Delhi and Lahore is evidently derived from a later type of Persian faïence, namely that which was in vogue in the 16th and 17th century under the great rulers of the Safavi dynasty (A.D. 1502-1736) who were contemporaneous with the Great Moghuls of India. As early as the 15th century examples of this style of *kashi* work occur on Persian buildings. Sarre reproduces a piece of faïence mosaic which he acquired at Teheran, but which was said to originate from the famous Mosque of Imam Riza at Meshed (Mashad). This specimen is similar in design to Lahore tilework and has the same scheme of colour including crimson. The mosque of Meshed is said to be contemporaneous with the Blue Mosque of Tabriz, but some portions were added by the rulers of the Safavin house.

The Persian section of the Musée du Louvre contains a "plaque de faïence de revètement" originating from a mosque at Tauris of the 15th century. This specimen also exhibits exactly the same style as the *kashi* work of Lahore. It contains a fragmentary Arabic inscription in white letters interlaced with yellow flowers and stalks of turquoise blue on a dark-blue background. It is interesting to note the difference between this piece of Persian tile-mosaic and the earlier work of the 14th century—the large lustre tiles with letters and ornaments in relief, turquoise blue on a ground of white-and-gold.

A building of exceptional interest in the history of Persian tile decoration is the Mausoleum of Shaikh Safi-ud-Din at Ardebil in Azerbaijan, half-way between the Caspian Sea and the volcano Sawalan Dagh. Shaikh Safi, the progenitor of the Safavin house lived in the first half of the 14th century. The mausoleum built by his son contains not only the Saint's grave, but also those of Ismail the first Safavi king and his three successors. From Abbas the Great (1587-1629) the Persian kings were buried at Kum, but still regarded the Mausoleum of Ardebil as their national sanctuary. The tile-work was commenced in the 16th century and completed under Abbas II. (1642-1667), and therefore coincides with the great period of this decorative art in India.

* *Mathura* 2nd. ed. 1880, pp. 140ff, and Blochmann, *Proc. As. Soc., Bengal*, for 1873, p. 12. † *Moghul Colour Decoration of Agra*, Part I, Allāhabad.

‡ The following observations regarding Persian tile-work are largely derived from Friedrich Sarre's monumental work: *Denkmaeler Persischer Baukunst*, Berlin, 1901.

The tomb of the Saint itself—a tower-like building circular in plan and surmounted with a flat dome—is faced with red and blue glazed bricks. This mode of decoration is quite different from that of the Moghul period but seems related to that of the Rukn-i-Alam of Multan. The decoration of the prayer room also differs from Indo-Moghul work, both as regards design and colour. Black and dark green, not found in India, are prominent.

The entrance gateway, however, which was built in the reign of Abbas II. and completed in A.D. 1647-48, as recorded by an inscription in tile-work, is profusely decorated with faiënce mosaics closely related to those found on the monuments of Hindustan. "The spandrels contain light-coloured flower stalks interlaced with arabesques on a dark ground. The inscription which consists of white letters interlaced with slim spiral tendrils on a dark-blue ground is surmounted by a frieze of rectangular panels with a stalactite decoration above. In these panels the arabesque disappears almost completely, and in their stead we find the flower-stalk mostly issuing from a vase and filling the arched area of the panel. These rounded vases are likewise conventionalized and have a foot in the shape of a pointed leaf resembling a Persian palmette. These are derived from Chinese examples and are found in Persian art from the middle of the 16th century, also on carpets of the period—the so-called vase-carpets." (Sarre). We have noticed above that such flower-vases form a common feature on the tile mosaics of Lahore. Sarre remarks that Chinese influence makes itself felt in Persian art from the 16th century onward—in ceramic art, in carpets and in miniature painting.

It is not a little curious that on the same gate of the mosque of Ardebil we find a panel in which the Chinese vase is placed between two peacocks—a device which, as Sarre observes, is very frequent in Byzantine art. I may add that it is also very common in Hindu sculptures of the Western Himalaya, especially on the carved fountain-stones of Chamba State, but—strange to say—in Indian tile-work it does not occur.

An inscription on the gate of Shaikh Safi's mausoleum mentions the name of Juh ibn Isfahani as the architect of the building. At Isfahan, the capital of the Safavin kings, we find several more examples of that fainëce decoration which rose to such prominence during their reign. The mosque of Shaikh Lutf-ullah, situated on the east side of the famous Maidan, was built under Shah Abbas in the beginning of the 17th century. The entrance gate resembles that of the Mausoleum of Ardebil, but is only partly decorated with real mosaics. "Only the upper portion of the niche" Sarre remarks, "with the stalactite vault and the inscription band shines in the brilliant colour of the faiënce mosaics, contrasting strongly with the faint colours of the [square] tiles beneath which were first glazed and subsequently painted."

In the Madrasah Madar-i-Shah or "College of the Queen-Mother" situated on the east side of the Chahar Bagh at Isfahan we find also mostly square tiles side by side with faiënce mosaics. It was built in A.D. 1710 by Shah Husain in memory of his mother, and consequently is one of the latest examples of decorative tile-work found in Persia.

The growing use of square tiles during the 17th century was evidently due to the greater facility of this procédé compared with the laborious, but much more effective art of tile-mosaic, in which each piece had to be cut to its proper shape. The change, therefore, marks a decided degeneration, though an attempt was made to imitate in the square tiles the designs of the old mosaics.

It is noteworthy that in the latest examples of Indian tile-work also we find the faiënce mosaics replaced by square tiles. This is, for instance, the case with the mosque of Begampura near Lahore which was built by Zakariyya Khan, surnamed Khan Bahadur, the Governor of the Punjab under Muhammad Shah. It seems, therefore, that throughout its history the Indian art of tile decoration has closely followed the examples furnished by Iran.

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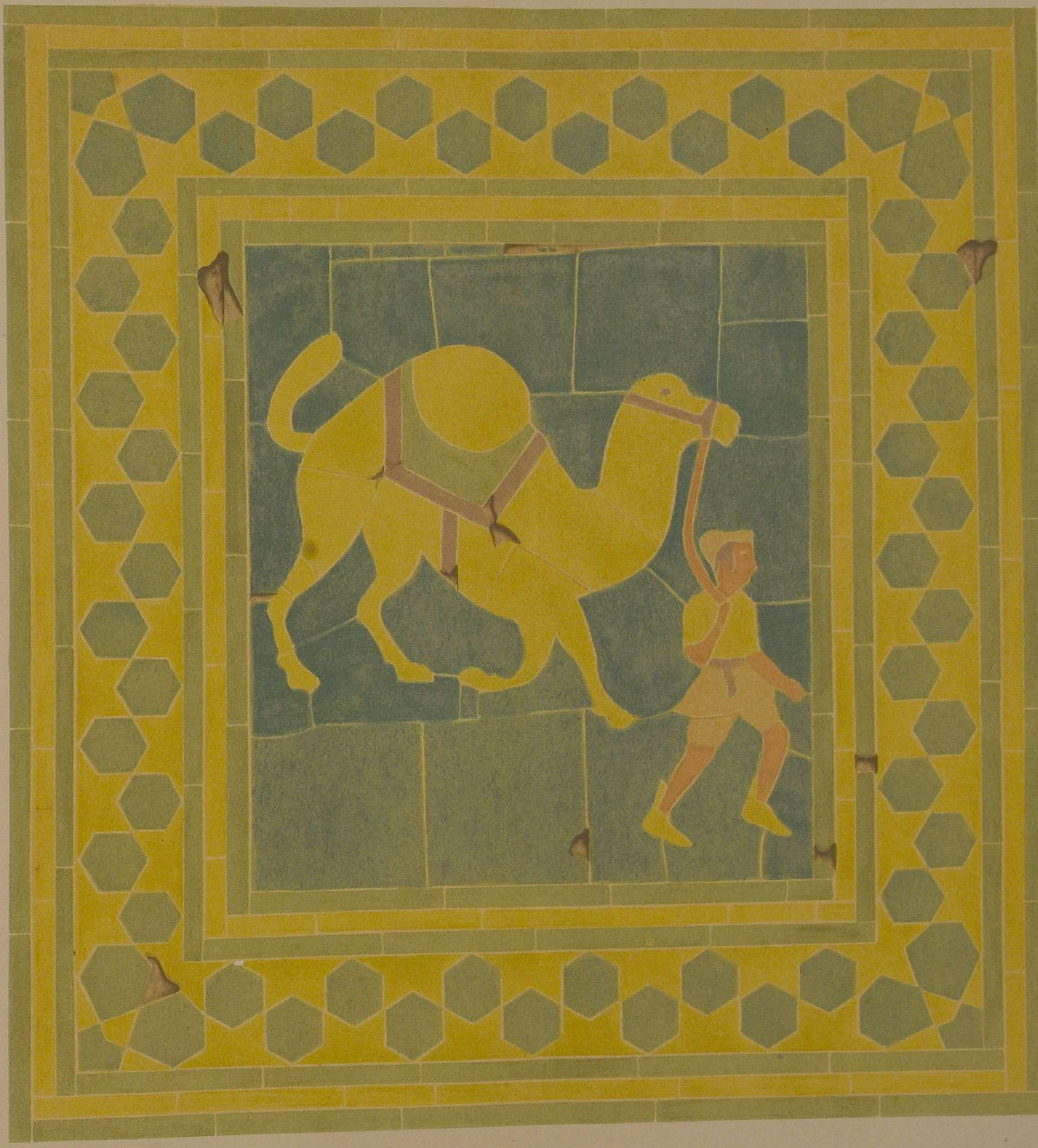

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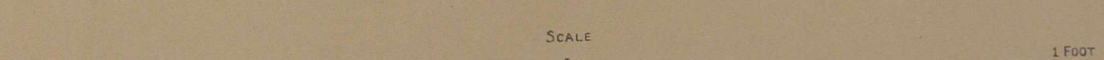

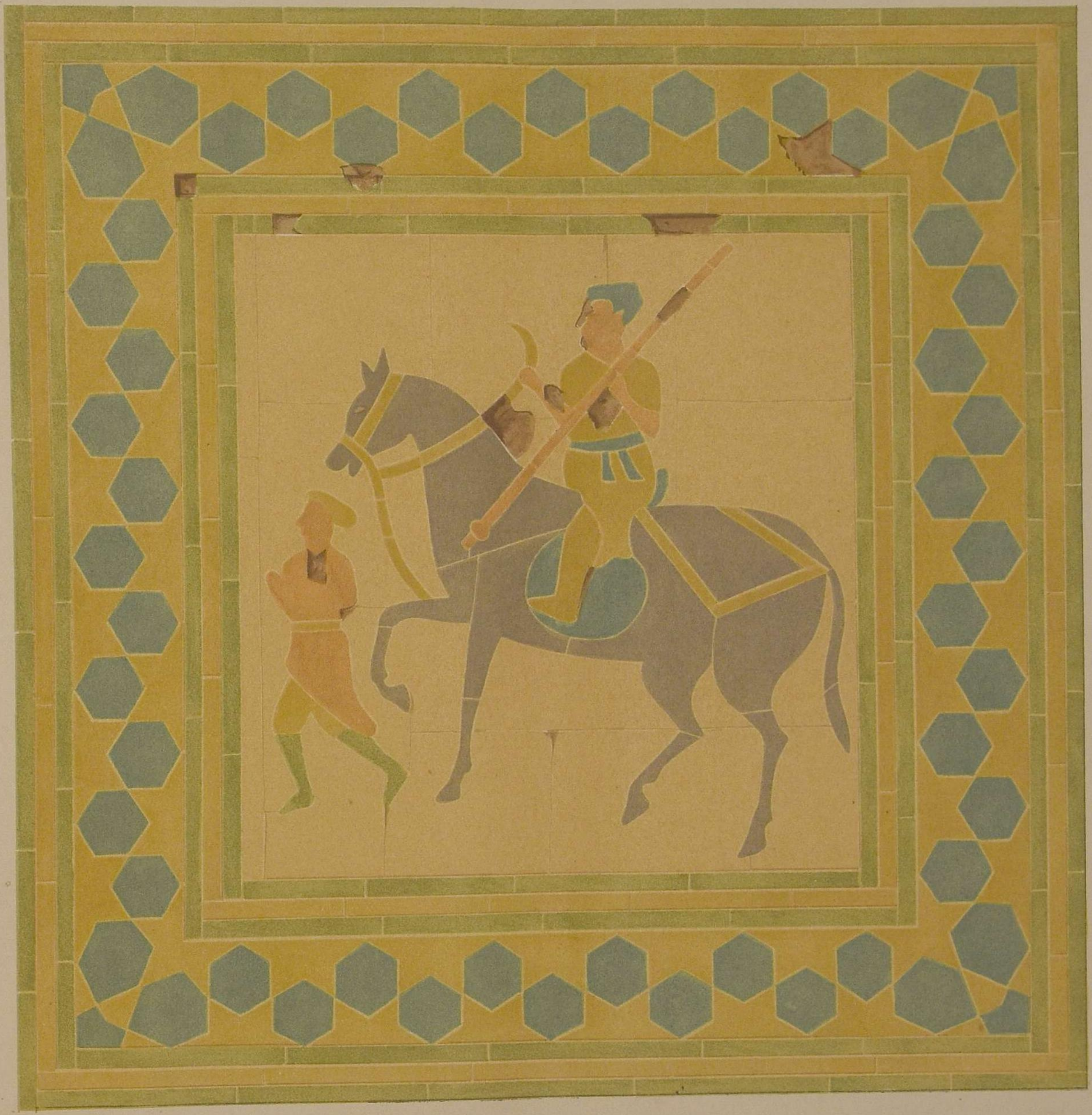

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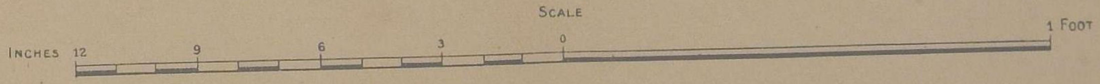

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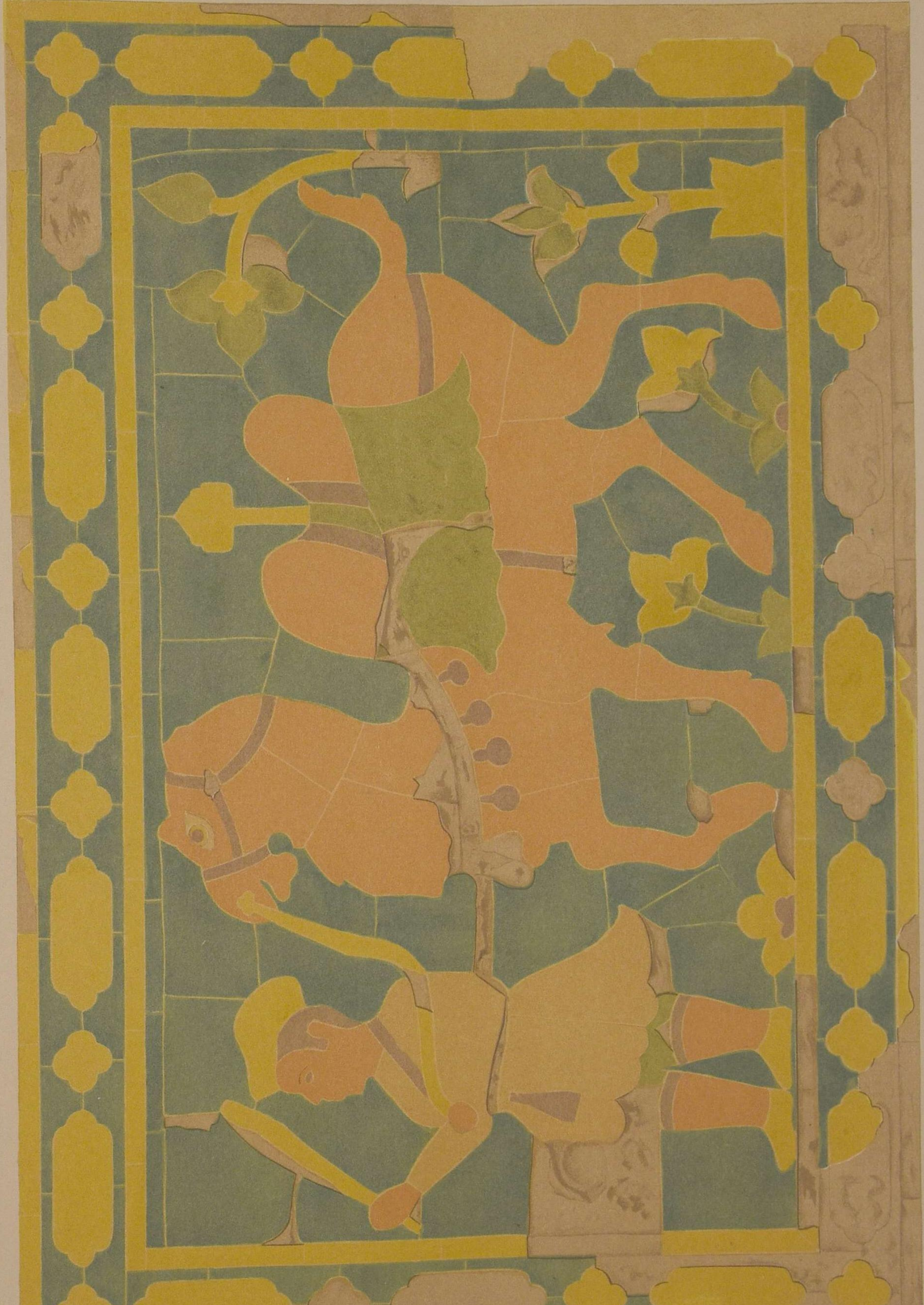

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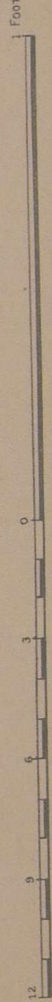

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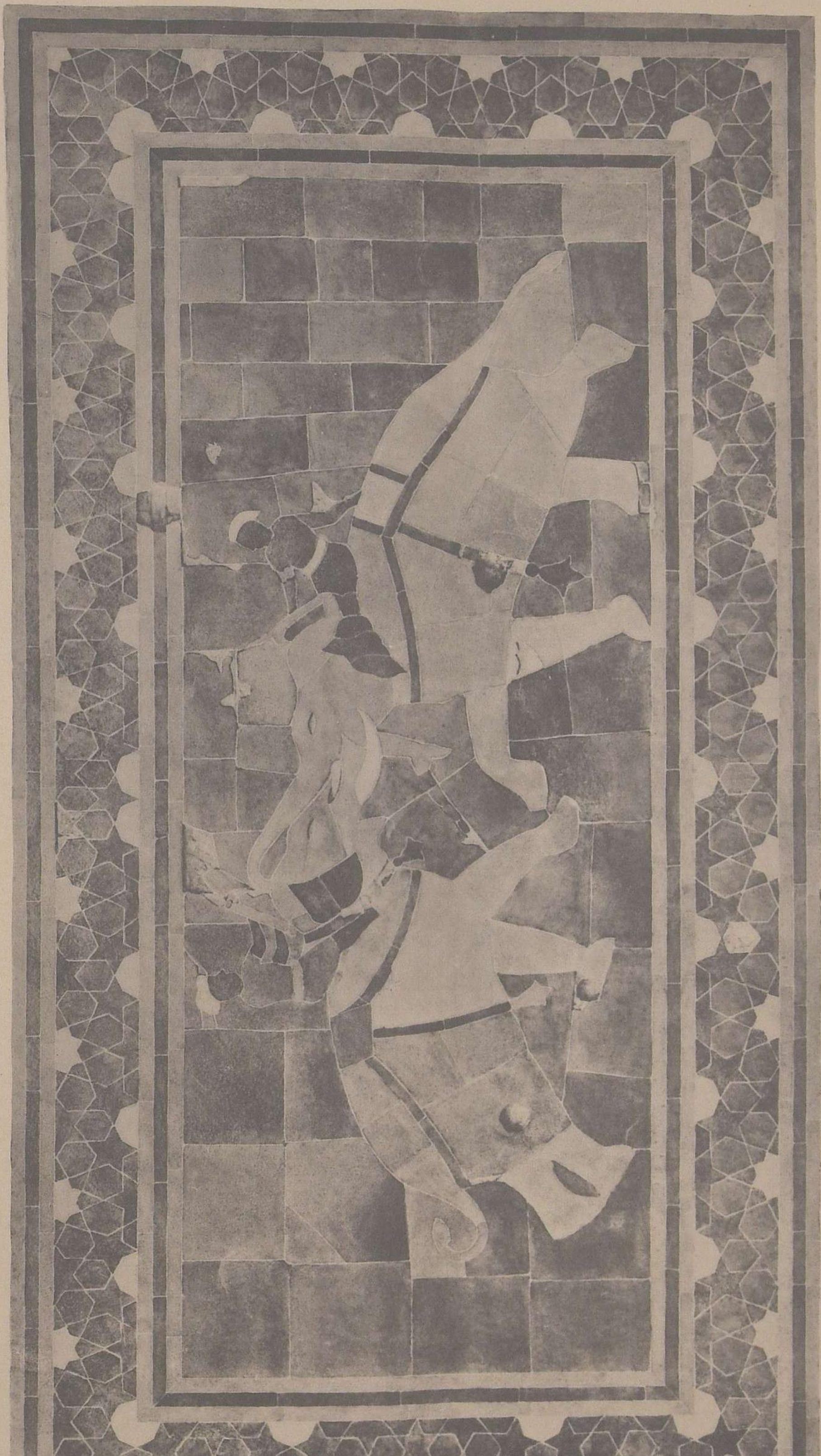

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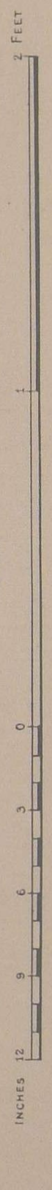

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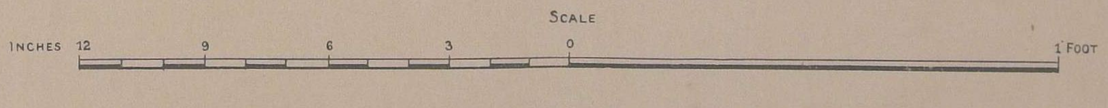

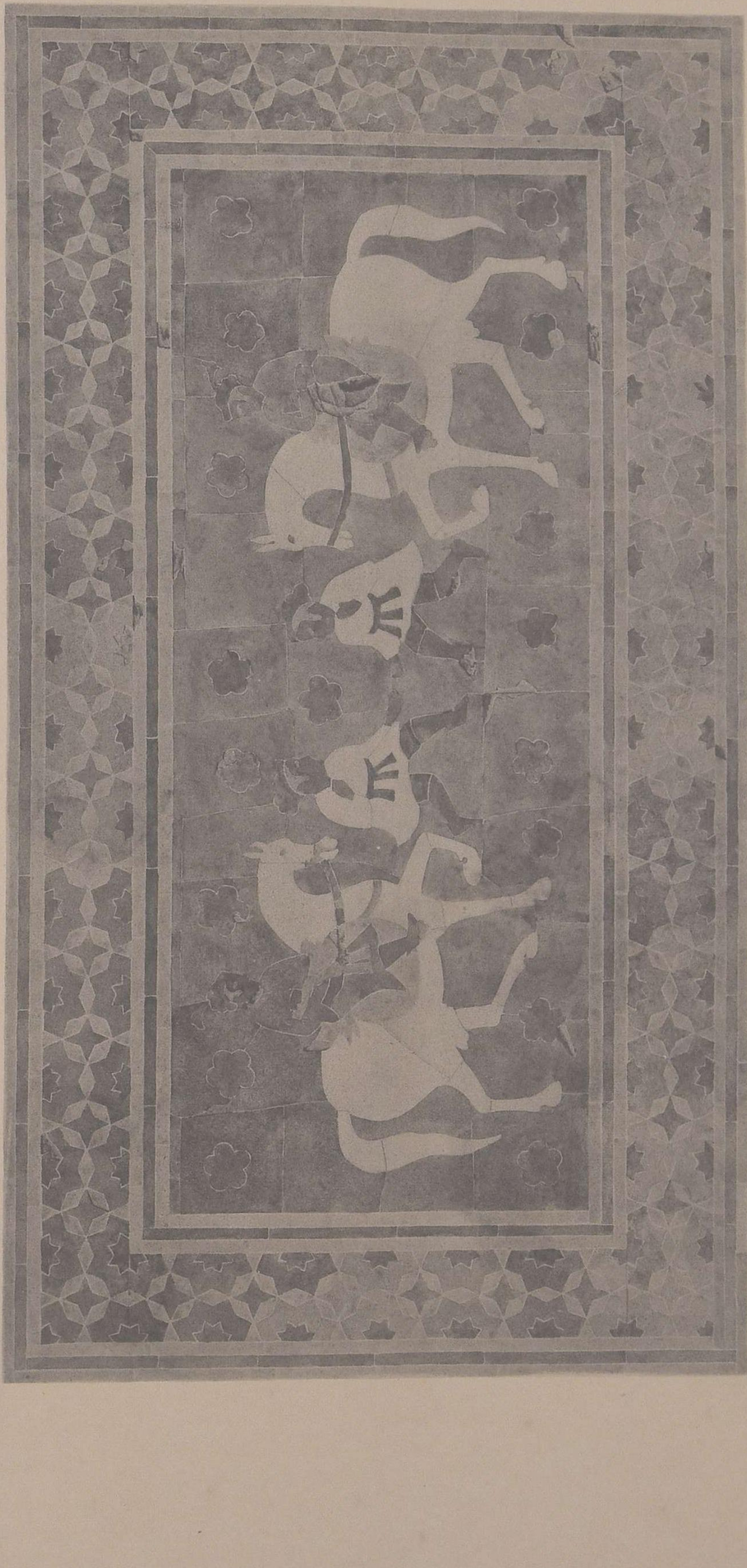

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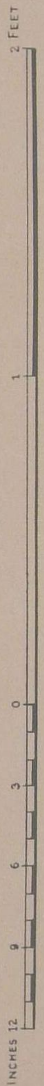
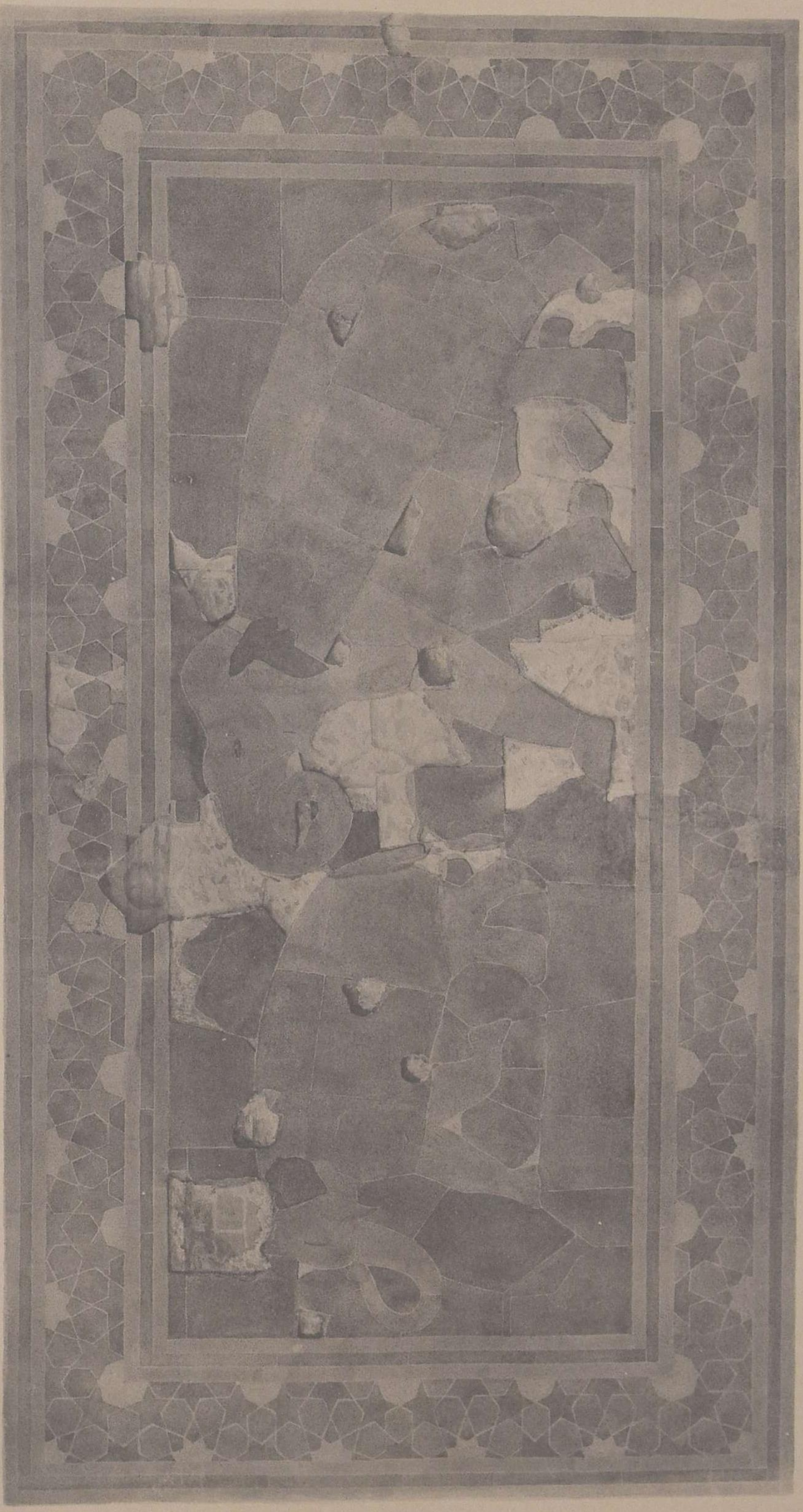




No. 5.

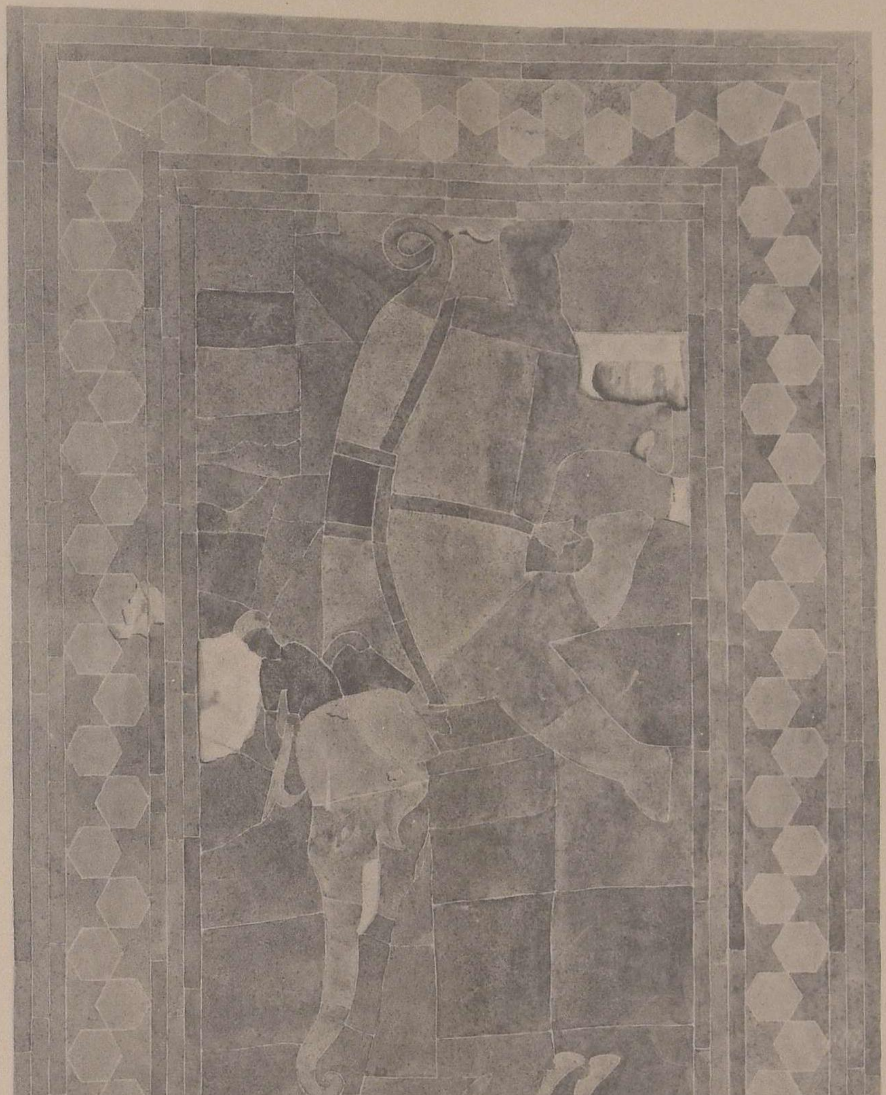
Scale

Inches 12 9 6 3 0 1 2 Feet

No. 6.

SCALE

INCHES 12 9 6 3 0 1 FOOT



No. 9.

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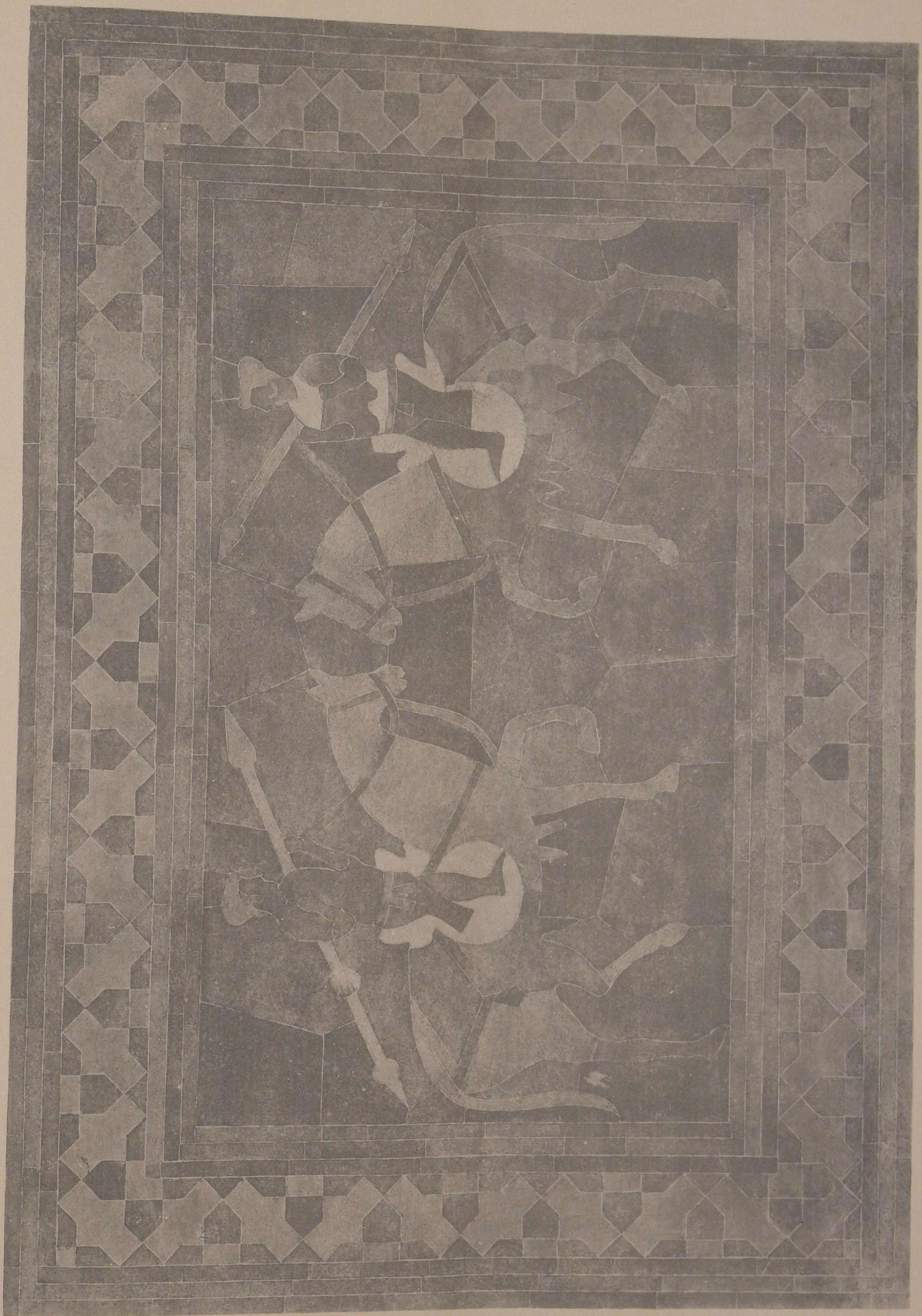

No. 11.

Scale

Inches 12 9 6 3 0 1 Foot

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